



USAID | AFGHANISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GENERAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

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Women Weaving a Future

Carpet weaving is a centuries-old tradition for women in rural Afghanistan, but many women have had little control over their pay and involvement in the industry. Women in conservative villages typically have not worked outside of their homes. Their lack of mobility and education limited their employment options. One USAID program carried out by ARZU ("hope" in Dari) is changing this by developing economic opportunities for vulnerable women weavers through a sustainable carpet project with access to U.S. markets.



Photo: USAID/Arzu

ARZU's "Hope" Carpet

This program has helped carpet weavers in northern and central Afghanistan by providing technical and financial assistance to women weavers, social assistance to their families, access to healthcare for mothers, and education and literacy programs. In addition to creating sustainable employment for the women, the program aims to establish additional roles for women in the carpet production chain, such as spinning and carding wool, and graph-making.



Photo: USAID/Arzu

Gul Naar's husband was killed by a mine while he was farming. Gul Naar, who never attended school, now supports five children, aged eight to 21, through the weavers' project. As part of this program, she and her daughters attend literacy class: "Now we can read Dari. We feel very happy when we read our books and write."



Photo: USAID/Arzu

Taza Gul, whose husband died fighting the Taliban in Kandahar 6 years ago has supported two small babies through the USAID/ARZU weavers' project. Her wish is to help her daughter to become literate and become financially independent.

To date, more than 120 families – approximately 1,200 individuals – have benefited from the USAID-funded project in Andkhoy and Kabul. For more information on this project, visit www.arzurugs.org.

If you would like to receive USAID updates on Afghanistan, please e-mail aperrelli@usaid.gov.



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Photo: USAID/Nitin Madhav

A Hazara woman carries bread from Bamiyan town. Many Afghan women are widows and sole providers for their families. USAID offers training and income generation projects to help women support their households.

Transforming Lives- A New Documentary for Women's Day

On March 8th, in honor of International Women's Day, USAID is unveiling a documentary to spotlight progress for women in Afghanistan, Lebanon, and the Philippines. The film focuses on women's advances toward economic freedom.

As a first step towards economic productivity and self sufficiency for Afghan women, USAID has focused on improving the health of women and children under five, because the country has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world and one out of every four children dies before the age of five.

USAID midwifery training programs address issues in women's health and provide employment for trained midwives. In 2003, Afghanistan had only 500 midwives. Now through USAID, 277 additional midwives have graduated from the Midwifery Training Program at the Institute of Health at four campuses and over 800 are expected to graduate by July 2006.

In addition to these midwifery training programs, USAID has helped Afghan women provide livelihoods for their families through small loan programs. Projects support women's efforts to start businesses through training, exchanges and financial support.

SECURITY INCIDENTS

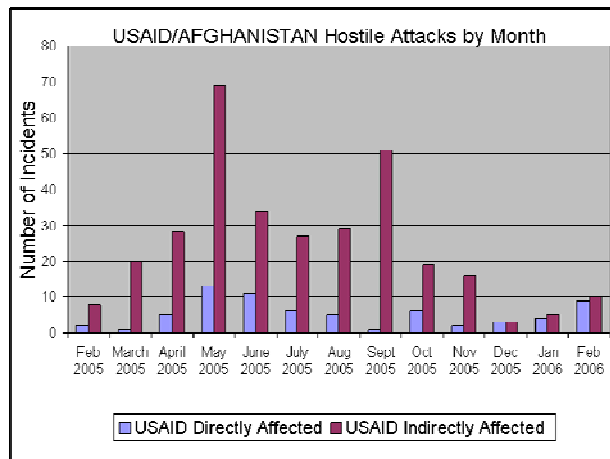
For this reporting period, a number of security incidents continue to negatively impact USAID projects.

Feb. 7: A road construction vehicle was hit by two improvised explosive devices (IED), killing four contractors from Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Turkey on the Farah to Ring Road Project.

Feb. 12 and 23: Rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) were fired on the rock crusher plant at the Jalalabad Road project. No injuries were reported. Neither the compound nor equipment was damaged.

Feb. 12 and 22: Six rockets were launched at the Sharan Compound on the Ghazni-Sharan Road project and crusher plant. Rockets did not damage the compound nor equipment. No injuries resulted.

Feb. 14: Armed men claiming to be Taliban threatened to kill Afghan workers if they continued to work for foreigners on the Lashkar Gah Road project.



The main purpose of the security incident graph is to provide a general update on security incidents as they relate to reconstruction in Afghanistan. The graph is simply a mechanism for tracking security incidents and does not analyze incidents or attempt to discern the motives or affiliation of the perpetrators. The focus of the graph is the frequency of incidents and their impact on USAID's work and also that of the development community writ large. The graph does not attempt to track all incidents regularly faced in Afghanistan.